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ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS NEWSLETTER



A Project of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists

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Editor: H. Loney Dickson

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ABAP UPDATE

The Bird Atlas is progressing on schedule. There have been delays in some areas but as of yet they have not delayed the final schedule. The book will be unveiled at the Provincial Museum on October 27, 1992. On October 28 we will begin shipping those books purchased in the pre-publication sale, while at the same time local bookstores will place the Atlas on their shelves.

The main delay has been the processing of documentation forms related to rare and extra-limited sightings. This was a difficult task that required a substantial contribution of time on behalf of the Records Confirmation Committee and the numerous Atlassers, who completed and sent in their documentation forms.

We are now in the process of producing the finalized maps for the Atlas and have included a sample and explanation of the map format in this newsletter. Confirmed breeders will be dealt with individually and will be the heart of the Atlas, though migrants, accidents, etc., will be dealt with in appendices. The photograph selection has been finalized and unselected photos have been returned. Photos that will be used will be returned by September to their owners.

The pre-publication sale has been initiated with the announcement in the Alberta Naturalist. D.W. Friesen has been selected as the printer for the Atlas, and has donated 10,000 colour brochures. These are being distributed across the province and to selected locations in Canada and the United States.

Through the *Project 25 Program* of Employment and Immigration Canada, we have been able to hire some excellent staff at no cost to the project. These positions include writers, researchers, a copy editor, a marketing director and a computer consultant.

In the event that another opportunity does not come up, the editorial staff would like to thank all the volunteers who contributed to this project. After the 27th of October we hope that you all feel it was worth the effort. □

GOOD LUCK

Petra Stubbs completed her term with the Atlas at the end of March, and is now working for Alberta Fish and Wildlife on the Peregrine Falcon Project. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Petra for her input, enthusiasm and long hours while working with the Atlas. Good luck in your future endeavours Petra. □

DON'T STOP NOW!

Well, we're in the home stretch. With the Atlas nearing completion the fate of the Atlassing project must be in the minds of everyone out there these days. The volunteers who worked so diligently over the last five years (you know who you are) must be wondering what will become of the Atlassers once the Atlas is on the shelves.

The Federation of Alberta Naturalists has expressed a keen interest in maintaining the Bird Atlas database following completion of this project. They are presently pursuing various options to find the most efficient way to handle not only the existing data base, but also the continual influx of new information.

In order to keep updating the Atlas database, we urge you not to hang up your *Atlassing hat* just yet. The feeling around this office is that it is vital to continue Atlassing. If the culmination of the Bird Atlas Project means the end of systematic bird data gathering in Alberta, the efforts of many will be diminished. It is up to all of us who have an interest in birds to make every effort to keep up to date records of the species breeding in Alberta. FAN encourages you to continue to send in your breeding observation data. If you require more data cards, please contact ANN from FAN at 453-8629.

So keep it up everybody. FAN will always be willing to take phone calls and to accept your field cards. □

MARKETING UPDATE

We are now in the final stage of the Alberta Bird Atlas Project – the publishing of the book. Our marketing strategy for the success of this publication revolves around three things – promotion, promotion and more promotion!

D.W. Friesen, our printer, has supplied us with 10,000 full-colour sales



brochures for distribution to various sources. As well as giving a general overview of the book, the brochure includes a pre-publication discount coupon that is also located in this newsletter. All of the past supporters of the project, management committee members and those who have provided services-on-kind have been sent brochures. They are also available at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, the John Janzen Nature Centre and, of course, at our friendly project office.

We have submitted an article to publications across Canada and the United States. In Alberta alone, we have been able to contact a number of editors of naturalist publications who have been very enthusiastic about spreading the news concerning our project.

Just a quick mention of the newsletters and magazines in Alberta who are planning to feature an article: The Steward, Update, Environment Views, Ellis Bird Farm Newsletter, Pica, Land-speak, Northern Light Aurora Newsletter, Brooks Fish & Game Newsletter, Beaverhill Bird Observatory Newsletter and the Lethbridge Naturalist Society Newsletter.

We have attended two environment fairs in the last couple of weeks. K97 hosted an Envirofest Day on May 31 at Hawrelak Park, and the town of Morinville sponsored a *Picnic in the Park* on June 6. We boosted exposure for the project by handing out brochures, bird atlas stickers and pins. FAN also donated six cups for draws. One of the highlights of our presentation was a loon decoy sitting on a mock nest. Many people were attracted to our booth by this unique display. We feel that ventures such as these are very successful in promoting interest and awareness of the book and we hope to attend more environmental fairs throughout the summer.

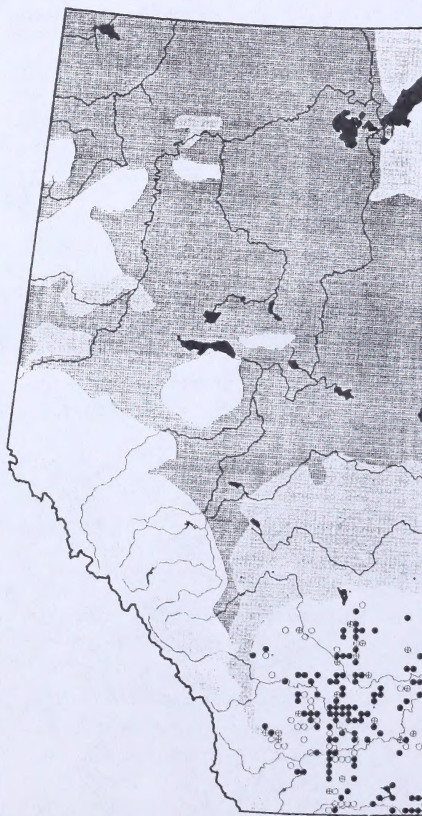
Of course, none of our marketing efforts would be possible without donations from corporate sponsors. Therefore, we have sent out requests for funding to approximately 50 companies in Alberta and are awaiting reply. Hopefully, through these endeavours the Atlas will be brought to a successful fruition. □

—Karen Seto

MAPPING PROCEDURES

Breeding bird atlases provide detailed knowledge of the breeding distribution of birds and this knowledge represents a snapshot in time. (William G. Bousman – proceedings of the Fourth Breeding Bird Conference.)

The chosen method for presenting biogeographic data is with a map. Below is a black and white version of the colour map that will appear in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta*. This map design was chosen for several reasons. You will first notice that the map has the province broken down into six regions. These are the natural regions of the province as described by Alberta Recreation and Parks. These regions group similar habitat and climate regions into larger grouping to give a general feel for the different ecological regions of the province. This natural region approach was chosen to emphasize the correlation of species to habitat.



Burrowing Owl

Also on the map are some of the major lakes and rivers of the province, to help the reader to orient a sighting to a more common physical reference without cluttering the map with titles and roads.

Thirdly, there are the symbols themselves. The Atlas collected data according to the UTM grid system, which has 100 x 100 km blocks, and 10 x 10 km squares. The Atlas data gathered represents a point within a square but not an average of the entire square, since techniques required to collect such data were not feasible for the Atlas project. As a result, a circle was chosen as the base symbol, as it is located in the centre of a square but does not create the illusion of a square average that a grid would. Then, in accordance with good cartographic technique, the most important data was assigned the strongest visual symbol and the least significant data the weakest visual symbol. Thus, confirmed data has a solid circle, probable data has a circle with a cross-hatch, possible data has an empty circle, and mere observations were assigned a very small, empty circle. □

A COMPUTER DATA BASE—NOT JUST A MAGIC BLACK BOX

A database is an ordered grouping of information. This term is often used loosely to refer to a Data Base Management System (DBMS), which includes the information, file structures containing the information and the programs written to access and manipulate this information. Some users expect a DBMS to be a magic black box, effortlessly wielded by computing wizards. This lack of appreciation for the creativity and effort of the designer, often become a source of frustration for both parties.

During the past five field seasons, over 122,000 records have been collected. To manage this amount of information is a formidable task, requiring a DBMS. At the inception of the Bird Atlas Project, the manner in which this data would be handled was unclear, requiring the database designers to

TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION

The Atlas of the breeding Birds of Alberta would not have been possible without the support and assistance of countless friends and volunteers. In an effort to show their appreciation in some small way, The Federation of Alberta Naturalists wants to ensure that an invitation reaches all Atlassers to take advantage of the pre-publication discount. The retail price of this hardbound copy to the Atlas will be \$45.00.

However, if ordered before August 1, 1992, the coupon below outlines an excellent opportunity to save money. Please order early to take advantage of this discount. □

Pre-Publication Discounts!

on orders placed before August 1, 1992

Reserve your copy now for \$36⁰⁰ \$45⁰⁰ Regular

• save 20⁰⁰ off retail!

Gifts! Gifts! Gifts! Extra copies...

- 2 @ \$69⁰⁰ – save 23%! \$90⁰⁰ Regular
 - 3 @ \$99⁰⁰ – save 27%! \$135⁰⁰ Regular
- \$33⁰⁰ each additional copy over 3 copies.

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create a loose and flexible structure. Although flexibility in design is always desirable, when the manner in which the data will be accessed is unclear, design is much more difficult. Compounded with this problem was the fact that database management software has evolved tremendously in the last five years. These factors created a dynamic situation where design, management, problem solving and data entry were occurring simultaneously throughout the project.

During the first 5 years of the project the Alberta Bird Atlas DBMS was handled exclusively by Fish and Wildlife. Over the past winter, the Bird Atlas office in the Percy Page Centre has taken a more active role as a partner in development with Alberta Fish and Wildlife. Over this last winter the files and programs were brought from Dbase III to Dbase IV 1.1 and new mini-databases for the bibliography and corporate donor information was created.

This system is entirely menu driven, providing easy use even for the most unseasoned novice. It is the hope of the Bird Atlas staff that this DBMS can be further developed and maintained to provide easy access of information to all interested parties. □

—Trevor S. Wiens

WHERE NATURE MEETS HIGH TECHNOLOGY

Colour Images Graphics Inc. is an Edmonton company with 22 years in the pre-press industry. The services they provide include graphic design and typesetting through to colour separations and final, press-ready film.

The Federation of Alberta Naturalists needed this type of expertise to help in their mammoth project: The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta. The heart of the Atlas is composed of province-wide distribution maps that show where each species breeds throughout the different Alberta natural regions. These maps were prepared by us on IBM computers and transferred to discs. At Colour Images, this information is not compatible to their Macintosh driven system. The IBM information was then converted to

Mac language and stored in memory until the next step of production.

This step consisted of the page make-up and typesetting of each page including current distribution information, areas of concentration, range limits, population trends and protective legislation information. While this work was being carried out, three binders full of approximately 250 full colour species photographs were being scanned and colour corrected, if necessary, to ensure the species of bird is represented as true-to-life as possible. These scans were then archived on tape for later use.

The next phase of production consists of merging the text (type-setting) files, including the regional maps, with the graphic files (the photographs) onto one page and then out-putting this page as a high resolution, full colour Jet-proof. At this point, we are still able to mark type or colour corrections cost effectively because final film has not yet been created.

After proofing, the final film is out-put. The final film is four pieces of film, one for each process colour, that is sent to the printer to complete the final product: The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta. □

—Denis

NEW PARKS BOOK

The Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, in partnership with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, published Alberta's Parks – Our Legacy. This book will celebrate the 60th anniversary of Alberta's Provincial Parks.

Parks are an important component of our stewardship of the land. The lofty mountains of Kananaskis Country and White Goat Wilderness, the dark shady forests of Lakeland and Notikewin Provincial Parks, the waving grasslands of Hand Hills and Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserves, the rugged foothills of Beauvais Lake and William A. Switzer Provincial Parks, the ghostly hoodoos and badlands of Writing-on Stone and Dinosaur Provincial Parks and the storm beaches of Lesser Slave Lake

Provincial Park are landscapes of tremendous diversity and magnificent scenery. These jewels in Alberta's crown are set aside not only for our enjoyment but also as refugees for the myriad's of plants and animals that live there.

Alberta's Parks is also a celebration of people, a tribute to concerned citizens who lobbied for the establishment of parks and to the dedicated volunteers and staff who manage them.

Alberta's Parks – Our Legacy a 224 page, hard cover book beautifully illustrated with colour and historical photographs will be available in bookstores in mid-June at a retail price of \$29.95.

If you are interested in bulk purchases or in distributing the book, contact the Distributor: Lone Pine Publishing, Suite 206, 10426 - 81 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta. T6E 1X5 Telephone (403) 433-9333 Fax: 433-9646. □

AND IN YOUR COPIOUS SPARE TIME!

Response to my earlier note about the *Breeding Bird Survey* has been so successful that Jack Park needs to buy some new maps! Way to go Atlassers!

Some readers may be interested in some of the other naturalist activities that can be pursued this coming Season of the Green. Space limitations require that I just list these activities by title and contact name – if anything strikes your fancy, go for it!

1. Alberta Wildflower Survey

Flowering times of 15 native plants species.

Elisabeth Beaubien, Wildflower Survey, c/o Devonian Botanic Garden, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2E1 Phone: 438-1462 (res.) 487-3054 (bus.).

2. May Species Count

Counts of all species of plants in flower, all birds & mammals seen on May 30, or 31, 1992.

Plants: Derek Johnson, Northern Forestry Centre, 5320 - 122 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 3S5 Phone: 435-7306 (bus.)

Birds, Mammals: Provincial Coordinator c/o Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Box 1472, Edmonton, AB T5J 2N5
Phone: 453-8629.

3. Banding Birds

Various projects for keen birders with varying degrees of experience.

Edmonton Area: Stefan Jungkind, Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Box 4201, Edmonton, AB T6E 4T2
Phone: 465-2370 (res.)

also, Geoff Holroyd Canadian Wildlife Service, 2nd Flr., 4999 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3
Phone: 468-8922 (bus.) 438-1462 (res.).

Calgary Area: Doug Collister, 3426 Lane Cr, SW, Calgary, AB T3E 5X2
Phone: 240-1635 (res.).

4. Ellis Bird Farm Bluebird Project

Assist biologist to monitor nest boxes and record productivity.

Myrna Pearman, Ellis Bird Farm, Box 2980, Lacombe, AB T0C 1S0
Phone: 346-2211.

5. Breeding Bird Census

Rigorous survey of a sample plot, require repeated visits, write-up and strict procedure to define bird territories.

Geoff Holroyd, Canadian Wildlife Service, 2nd Flr., 4999 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3
Phone: 468-8922 (res.) 438-1462 (bus.).

6. International Shorebird Survey

Spring and fall survey of designated shorebird staging sites; also search for colour-marked shorebirds.

Loney Dickson, Canadian Wildlife Service, 2nd Flr., 4999 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3
Phone: 468-8917 (bus.).

7. Prairie Nest Record Scheme

Collect records from repeated, non-disruptive visits to bird nests, fill out standard cards.

Edmonton Contact: Loney Dickson, Canadian Wildlife Service, 2nd Flr., 4999 - 98 Ave., Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3
Phone: 468-8917 (bus.)

Assistant Curator of Ornithology, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 190 Rupert Avenue., Winnipeg. Manitoba R3B 0N2 Phone: (204) 956-2830 (bus.)

8. Calgary Bird Records Project

Send in observations of birds in the Calgary area, on bird record sheets.

Calgary Field Naturalists' Society, P.O. Box 981, Calgary, AB T2P 2K4
Phone: 285-8553 (Inglewood office) 237-8821 (Rare Bird Alert & Wildlife Info. Line).

9. Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Volunteer Stewardship Program

Hands-on management and interpretation - training provided.

Naturalist, Calgary Parks & Recreation, Inglewood Bird Sanctuary #63, Post Office Box 2100, Station "M," Calgary, AB T2P 2M5
Phone: 269-6688 (bus.).

10. Breeding Bird Surveys

Intensive roadside surveys of all birds seen and heard; designated routes.

Jack Park, Provincial Coordinator BBS, 10236 - 70 Street, Edmonton, AB T6A 2T4 Phone: 469-8127 (res. - evgs).

11. Volunteer Steward Program

Stewardship role on designated Natural Areas; prefer commitment for at least two years; sites that need Volunteer Stewards are fairly remote.

Volunteer Steward Coordinator, Natural and Protected Areas Section, Public Lands Division, Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, 4th Flr., South Tower, Petroleum Plaza, 9915 - 108 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 2C9
Phone: 427-5209. □

— David M. Ealey

LOST CONTACT

Does anyone know the whereabouts of these Atlassers?

Cheryl Wall	Satu Pernanen
Peter Goddard	Geoff Scott
David Tate	Lennie Niel
Deborah Taylor	Gary Erickson
Lee Bannister	Christy Butt
T. Christensen	Joan DeGeer
Angus MacLeod	D. Abitt
Marian Porter	Eleanor Riddecliffe
Kerry Rees	Rod Scout
Rodney Allison	George Freeman
Carl Cooper	Marje Jensen
Will Johnson	R.K. Christen
Chris Siddle	Kathleen Williams
Tracy Anderson	Michael Quinn
John W. Thompson	Keane Tower
Gretchen Whetham	Boyne Hill
J. Mackenzie	Elaine Trembley
Doreen Cuddie	Terry Hanak
Kim Clark	Rosemary Baxter

We've lost touch with these people and we need addresses to send them their certificates of appreciation. We are also trying to update our acknowledgments list, and need to get in touch with these Atlassers.

If any of you can help us in this regard please call our office at 453-8629. Thanks again. □

— Jane

ALBERTA BIRD ATLAS PROJECT, C/O

Alberta
CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM
PROVINCIAL MUSEUM OF ALBERTA
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Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T5N 0M6